

TESTIMONY
HOUSE BILL No. 4416
May 10, 2017

My name is Walter M. Whitehouse, Jr. I am a retired physician and a member of the executive committee of the Physicians for the Prevention of Gun Violence. It is my pleasure to represent our organization at this hearing today. We have a membership of approximately 500 physicians across the state of Michigan representing primary care and both medical and surgical specialties. We believe that we bring an important perspective to the gun violence debate. No matter what specialty, we have all dealt with patients who were victims of gun violence as well as their resultant injuries and disabilities. The pathologists have dealt with those that didn't survive the violence. Our position is thoughtful and reasonable. We support universal background checks on all gun purchases, the elimination of physician gag laws, restriction of the manufacture and sale of all military style assault weapons and large capacity magazines for civilian use, research to support strategies for reducing firearm related injuries and deaths. We also support the maintenance of some traditional gun-free zones, including bars, schools and hospitals. Importantly, we strongly support education concerning gun safety.

You are now considering House Bill No. 4416 which represents a dramatic shift from Michigan's current firearm laws. Indeed, it will allow anyone to carry a loaded concealed weapon in public. It is said that this will result in ending restraints on our second amendment rights. After all, why should a law-abiding citizen have to go through the hassle of applying for a permit then having to undergo safety training before appearing in public with a concealed and loaded firearm? It is said, "people who want to ensure the safety of their families against the criminal element should not have to beg for that right"

The push for more permissive CCW laws is in part related to the belief that the presence of more guns on the street leads to decreases in crime. The concept that more guns result in a safer community is based on deeply flawed research. When research errors are corrected, the associations between right-to-carry laws and decreased violent crime either disappear or show evidence that these laws actually increase assault with firearms. There is no credible evidence that increasing the presence of guns in public will reduce crime. Claims that guns are frequently used defensively seem to be widely exaggerated. Even when a gun is used in self-defense, which is rare, research would suggest that it is no more likely to reduce a person's chance of being injured during a crime than other forms of protective action. Importantly, the presence of a gun in the home actually place gun owners and their families at increased risk of death by homicide, from between 40 and 170%. In addition, 50% of all suicides are committed with firearms.

House Bill No. 4416 will do away with required CCW permits and the required completion of a firearm safety course. This will result in increased danger to the general public. To put this in some perspective, review of the MSP (Michigan State Police) database reveals interesting information. Between 1012 and 2016, 10,533 CCW permit applications were denied and 11,500 existing permits were suspended or revoked. In total, that means that under House Bill No. 4416 more than 20,000 persons currently without CCW permits (either rejected or suspended) would be freely carrying concealed